

# SOCIAL ACTION



APRIL 1955

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Social Survey

**As. 10**

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## THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL CONFERENCE

Ernakulam, April 1954

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# SOCIAL ACTION

VOL. 5 NO. 4

APRIL 1955

THIS SIDE AND THAT	A. L.	145
FACTORY NOISE	P. J. SURRAO	149
THERE IS NO MUSIC....	I. HOYLE	157
THE CHINGLEPUT DEVELOPMENT BLOCK	C. C. CLUMP	158
CATHOLIC SOCIAL ACTIVITY	A. F. & F. C. R.	165
SOCIAL DOCUMENTS	F. C. RODRIGUES	170
SOCIAL SURVEY	E. GATHIER	181
BOOK REVIEWS		188

## *This Side and That*

### *Naughty Questions*

The President's address which opened the budget session was heartening to hear. India is rightly proud of her achievements at home; the refugee rehabilitation is well on the way to be solved; the food problem does not vex the mind any more though the public eye will always scan the skies for rain clouds; dams and factories have changed the industrial landscape, and community projects have rejuvenated the countryside. India is on the move, there is hope in her eyes and buoyancy in her gait. Parliament was beaming with self-satisfaction. Even our foreign policy met with little criticism. The Comrades who have received new directives from Moscow admitted we are no more the running dogs of imperialism and the Congress parliamentarians have grown into submissive dutiful *chelas*. Only two naughtily knotty questions were shot with the effectiveness of broadsides. If we take it as a policy to acknowledge facts, why not admit that there are two governments in China as we admit that there are

two in Viet Nam, Korea, Germany? If we stand by the principle of self-government, why not stand by the right of the Formosa people? A third might have been added: Why no reference to the Chinese universal conscription that will raise not less than twenty million soldiers in a few years?

### *Dialectics*

The budget was expected to give us an outline of the first draft of the rough copy of the famous socialistic pattern of our welfare state. What was produced was so indistinct that dialectical humour is making furore in the lobbies. The diehards quote the Churchillian quip about Christopher Columbus having been the first socialist. Sir Winston's arguments are trotted out with gusto: Columbus did not know where he was going; he got something quite different from what he was seeking; finally (and this is most important) he did it all on some one else's money. Others counter that if Columbus was the thesis, the modern capitalist is the antithesis; he knows what he is going to get, he gets exactly what he seeks, and (this is most important) the only thing he seeks and gets is money. Which reactions of the local wits go to show that our socialistic pattern is very hazy.

### *Timidity*

When challenged about having changed his views, the Prime Minister retorted that he stood by what he had written some twenty-five years ago and that he still maintains political democracy is futile unless accompanied by economic democracy. Unhappily he did not elaborate the point. Unless one is dazed with

timidity, one should boldly pursue the idea to its practical conclusions. Political democracy implies that each citizen is made an independent political unit, were it only a voting unit; logically economic democracy should suppose everybody being an independent economic unit, were it only a possessing unit. Hence the way to economic democracy lies in the fair distribution of the national income and of the national wealth: family wages, easy access to property, etc.

But the tendency of modern times is the other way about, and our 1955-56 budget is quite modern. By and large it provides for a substantial extension of the public sector. An ominous development, indeed, which recalls what Engels wrote in *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*: "The modern state, whatever be its form, is essentially a capitalist machine.... The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national Capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit."

### **Backward Classes**

The Report of the Kalelkar Commission is replete with factual information; with arithmetical detachment, it brings out sorry spots in our society. The naked fact is that nearly two hundred million citizens are to be classed as backward socially and educationally, (the economically backward did not fall under the survey). If one adds the Scheduled Castes who total over sixteen per cent of the population and the Scheduled Tribes who make up another five per cent, the backward magma engulfs some eighty per cent of our 360 millions. The picture turns into a Chinese puzzle when one takes into account the class division:

a minimum of 125 classes in each state. In agriculture, there are farmers, tenants of various types, fishermen, etc.; in traditional occupations, barbers, weavers, potters, water-carriers, etc.

Most of the blame apparently falls on the privileged classes, who perpetuate this state of affairs, not out of deliberate malice, but out of sheer respectable tradition; a man is born backward and stays so till death.

What are the remedies? Reservation in public services according to numbers? Cottage industries, agricultural loans, schooling facilities? As soon as particular measures will be proposed, sharp controversies are bound to arise and explode. What was done by force of habit may be continued deliberately. Neither will the gigantic task of rehabilitation be achieved overnight by a stroke of the pen, nor will official goodwill be sufficient. The task calls for many Vinoba Bhaves and for many private agencies. And here one can visualise a fair division and cooperation between the public sector and the private sector; let public finances assist the resources and devotion of social workers volunteering for this noble national task.

A. L.

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“Material progress through research and the exploitation of natural resources continues its unceasing advance. The Church approves of this advance, even in regard to its principles. But . . . when material progress is not balanced by religious and moral forces, it risks becoming the cancer of human society.” (Pius XII)

## *Factory Noise*

Recently, I happened to meet a friend of long ago whom I soon discovered to have lost his sense of hearing a little. It was painful to learn that he was handicapped for life. There was no doubt at all that this was the result of his having been exposed for a long time to a noisy workspot which was a boiler shop. It is this meeting with my friend and the painful discovery that prompted me to make a study of the problem of factory noise.

This article, then, strongly emphasizes and also examines the need for removing from the factory the danger of deafness resulting from exposure to excessive noise.

### **The Risk**

The ear, which is one of the most delicate organs of the human body, is not designed for tolerating extremely intense noise. Long exposure can do permanent damage to the ears. Yet many mistakenly believe that they often can "get used to it" without also realising that they can do so only at the great risk of becoming permanently hard-of-hearing.

Sound is first received by the ear drum which, being vibrated, passes on the refined sound-product for record on the nerve cells. When the sound is abnormal, such as that existing in a Boiler Shop, the whole hearing mechanism reacts violently, and thus arise discomfort and irritation. This reaction will be continuous as long as the noise continues. Persistent reaction over frequent and lengthy periods causes the

cells to become tired. The cell reaction decreases as a result of this fatigue and so also does the corresponding personal discomfort decrease, thereby giving cause for the common belief of "getting used to it".

At this stage the ears are said to have developed "auditory fatigue". By nature such fatigue is of a temporary character and adequate rest will, in most cases, remedy the defect.

If however this rest is denied and exposure to noise continues the cells tend to become damaged permanently, and so lose their latent power of recovering from auditory fatigue. This marks the beginning of partial deafness.

In the absense of good medical attention and as a result of continued exposure, the initial defect of partial deafness is encouraged to develop into a complete and permanent total loss of hearing. At present there is no known cure for such complete deafness.

### **Why Noise Control?**

This article does not ask for the complete elimination of all noise from the factory; it suggests the reduction of noise to protect the health of the worker. Do we not personally desire and appreciate a quiet atmosphere at our workspot? When we would do almost anything to remove all irritating noises from our surroundings, whether at home or at office, why should we not do the same for our fellow human being, the factory worker, who day in and day out is exposed to the continual clangour of hammer and heavy machinery?

As long as Industry remains indifferent to the evils of excessive factory noise, so long also does it



continue consciously to expose its employees to the ultimate danger of deafness. Surely, Industry does not expect society to uphold this neglectful attitude when it means the fruitless sacrifice of the worker's sense of hearing!

### Official Action

The first official step towards recognising deafness as an industrial disease, was taken by our Legislators in 1923 when the Workmen's Compensation Act was enacted to cover, among other diseases, those caused by noise. The Act recognises as an occupational disease, a permanent total loss of hearing caused by noise at the workspot, and, for awarding compensation, assesses the consequent loss of earning ability at 50% of normal working capacity. The idea underlying the Compensation Act is to make good the "economic disability" caused by injury. The award of compensation was not intended to be, and will not, in my opinion, ever be a solution to the evils of factory noise. *You cannot remove the danger of a worker's turning deaf by agreeing to compensate him for his deafness.*

While the Act has specifically provided for a permanent total loss of hearing no reference has been made to a permanent partial loss of hearing. Presumably, our legislators reserved to the State Governments the power to include such injury. It is noteworthy that Section 4, sub-section 3 of The Workmen's Compensation Act 1923, reads:

The State Government, after giving, by notification in the official Gazette, not less than three months

notice of its intention to do so, may, by a like notification, add any description of employment to the employments specified in Schedule III, and shall specify, in the case of the employments so added, the diseases which within the State shall be deemed, for the purposes of this section, to be occupational diseases peculiar to those employments respectively, and the provisions of sub-section (2) shall thereupon apply within the State as if such diseases had been declared by this Act to be occupational diseases peculiar to those employments.

There is much food for thought in the question whether State Governments could, under this provision, validly extend the benefits of compensation to cover a partial loss of hearing ?

#### **Further Official Action ?**

Continued disregard to the evils of factory noise will only strengthen the determination of certain sections of public opinion (of which the workers as citizens form a part) to push for legislation to compel Industry to undertake the control, and the provision of adequate safeguards against the dangers of harmful factory noise. Cannot Parliament on the strength of public opinion specifically extend the Compensation Act to cover partial deafness or even enact new legislation ?

Supposing the probability of statutory intervention were to materialise what would the position regarding the payment of compensation be ? Normally, compensation is awarded only for injuries and diseases accompanied by a loss of wage earning capacity. There is no such loss of earning capacity when the disease

is a partial loss of hearing. If the award of compensation is granted to partially deaf workers then they in addition to their usual wages would also receive compensation money. The employer pays both.

Of course, the employer can contest every such compensation claim. But, at present, several vital matters relating to diseases of the ear are still a matter of scientific discussion. In the absence of agreement, the views of the prosecution carry as much weight as those expressed by the employer's counsel. It is indeed hard to imagine how the employer could avoid paying every claim for compensation on partial deafness, when he is not able to substantiate his case with conclusive evidence. This fact coupled with the legal stipulation that the worker need not necessarily provide the evidence on his compensation-claim, provides an unrivalled opportunity for making easy money. The question is, would Industry survive under such an unprofitable and, undoubtedly, heavy drain on its resources.

### **Another Aspect**

It is once again repeated that the probability of statutory intervention depends on how Industry tackles the problem of factory noise. There is another aspect to be considered. Industry is constantly striving for more output, lower cost of production, and higher productivity of labour. These cannot be satisfied unless, among other things, sufficient attention is paid to the improvement of working conditions in the factory. Unnecessary, excessive noise undoubtedly detracts from congenial working conditions. When it is present, workers are exposed to discomfort and irritation. It is a fact,

too, that in proportion to such discomfort their working capacity is diminished, but the proportion is not mathematical but psychological. The ill effect of excessive noise upon the output of their labour is twofold: it has a direct effect in reduced efficiency by wear and tear on the nervous system, and it has also an indirect effect by damaging good relations with their employers. The effect of bad relations between employers and employees upon factory output is a matter of incalculable loss to be assessed in hundreds of thousands of Rupees in the course of many years. It must be seen that such a want of harmony means not merely no increase in production, but also it means a positive decrease to below normal. Discontent among workmen is a real financial loss to the businessmen, and it requires intelligence to remove it.

On the other hand, working conditions are greatly improved by the reduction of harmful factory noise. Free from the discomfort and strain of excess in this matter, the workers' capacity for production increases. Production per man-hour increases. Consequently, as output increases the fixed costs of production would be spread over more units of output, resulting in decreased costs per unit. Do not decreased unit-costs signify an increase in the profit-earning capacity of each unit? Would not increased profits mean increased bonuses for the workers? Would not award of a bonus lead to a contented labour force? Workers would not only appreciate the payment of a bonus but would also highly esteem the efforts of their employer to provide a healthy workspot by abating all burdensome noise. One way or the other, it all adds up to the attitude displayed by Industrialists, employers

and managers to the problem of industrial noise. I particularly include managers because they must realise that the well-being of their profession, which is a social process,<sup>1</sup> does depend on their attitude towards remedying the social ill of deafness caused by factory noise.

### **What Can Be Done**

Research, by its wide scope and heavy cost, is limited to the initiative of our larger undertakings. At this point, the reader may point out and justifiably that as Indian Industry is only adolescent its chances of successfully pioneering Industrial Research are indeed very shaky. Initially it would be preferable and profitable to study the results of investigations carried on abroad, notably in the U. S. A., where the problem of "Factory Noise" has been the subject of several research studies sponsored by American Industry and ably assisted by the State, private Institutions of Research, and Universities.

There are certain industries wherein noise is largely inherent and often unavoidable. It may not in this case, be economically feasible to investigate thoroughly the problem of factory noise. Known methods of noise control however can be applied to reducing as far as possible, all surplus noise as it often is the elimination of a few decibels of noise-sound which turns an unhealthy work-spot into a healthy one. The following suggestions of general import are offered with

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. : Brech, *Management : Its Nature and Significance*. Third Edition Page 6.

the object of pointing out what is usually done to effect this :—

- (a) The first thing to do is to localize the 'danger' areas. This may be done by classifying as 'dangerous' those places where it is very difficult for two persons to conduct a normal conversation.
- (b) With the 'danger' area defined it would be easier to discover the exact source of noise.
- (c) The third step would be to determine the causes of the noise. Are they avoidable or unavoidable? Can substantial reduction of noise be achieved by stressing better maintenance of noisy plant and machinery.
- (d) If noise cannot be reduced to any appreciable extent, the following measures may have to be considered :
  - (i) Would the use of alternative equipment reduce vibration and noise ?
  - (ii) When alternative methods of production cannot, for several weighty reasons, be considered, the use of acoustic materials should be contemplated.
  - (iii) Would a re-organisation of plant layout cause any reduction in plant noise ?

Where these methods do not prove successful more attention could perhaps be paid to safeguarding the health of the worker. There should be a regular medical examination of those workers who are constantly in contact with violent noise. Pre-employment tests should be made for separating workers who are diagnosed to be susceptible to the danger of easily succum-

bing to noise-deafness from normal workers. There is a disadvantage in using protective devices for the ears. The 'plug' may protect the ear from the strain of noise, but would the worker, for instance, be able to hear the warning shouts of his co-workers in the face of approaching danger, such as a falling load? Adequate medical attention should be provided for workers who become partially deaf and alternate methods of rehabilitating permanently deaf workers should be considered jointly with the Government.

Peter J. Surrao

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## *There is no Music*

(a social poem)

There is no music in the noise that jars

Where rumble round a hundred belted wheels,  
And clatter loudly whirling metal bars.

There is no music in the stream of stars

Bursting from where the tortured metal squeals,  
Nor in the rattle of production cars.

No music, but an endless, painful roar:

That forces entrance at the patient ear,  
But while it does so, closes tight the door.

And whose the ear then hearing never more,

After its owner long has laboured near  
The jangling noises that from factories pour?

'Tis oft the workman toiling on the site,  
And I am moved to better his sad plight.

J. Hoyle

## *The Chingleput Development Block*

Rural Welfare schemes have been in operation in the Madras State since 1946. They began with the Firka Development Plan which aimed at the general rehabilitation of village communities. This Plan was an attempt to translate into reality Gandhiji's dream of Village Swaraj. It was not surprising, therefore, when some few years later, the Community Development Programme was launched all over the country, rural rehabilitation was no stranger to Madras State. To-day, the State counts four Community Projects begun in 1952-53 ; four Community Development Blocks started in 1953-54, and twenty-eight National Extension Service Development areas. Taken together these projects cover a population of about 60 lakhs out of a total rural population of nearly 279 lakhs. The whole scheme also takes in about 3,000 village communities out of a total of 19,491 villages in the State.

Tirukalikundram, "the hill of the holy eagle" — for legend has it that this great bird makes a daily flight from the distant north to feed on the terrace of the temple on the hill — is the headquarters of, perhaps, one of the most progressive development areas—the Chingleput Development Block. The office of this Block is housed in a modest building within a few yards of a picturesque temple at the foot of the hill of the holy eagle. This development area covers about a third of the Chingleput District. It forms a well defined compact region, being bounded on the west and south by the sweeping curve of the sleepy Pala River as it winds its way into the Bay of Bengal. The



deep blue waters of the Bay form its eastern boundary. Expressed in figures the Development Block takes in 141.07 square miles of soil of average fertility, and it contains 112 villages made up of various classes of people, like the Harijans, Nayakars, Muddaliars and Brahmins. But figures tend to be illusive. They fail to convey any idea of the vastness of our development projects. They tell us nothing about the lives of the people in these areas, and of the conditions which obtain in the villages. This is why a visit to these areas is of particular interest. It is only when you, yourself, have travelled over miles of road, or have seen isolated villages far in the distance, and great undulating fields stretching as far as the eye can see, that you begin to glimpse the magnitude of the task undertaken by the Community Development Projects all over the country !

The Chingleput Development Block is no exception. It has its share of vastness, long distances, large areas of exhausted soil, stagnant village conditions, and above all the common rugged individualism of the village folk. The Block set its targets high. Indeed, as a Development Block its operations include the all round uplift of the area. Its improvement scheme includes such items as agriculture, animal husbandry, land reclamation, irrigation, health and rural sanitation, on the material side. On the more important social side, the scheme attempts what is, perhaps, more difficult, to infuse into the village folk a community spirit, and to bring them together in a common mighty effort for rural betterment born of the pride of mutual aid and self-help. The Block Team or Administrative Staff comprises, besides the Block Development Officer and

his clerical staff, one trained official for each of the different subjects on the development programme, and twelve village level workers, or *gram sevaks*. Each gram sevak has under his care between eight and nine villages. He is the real *contact officer* in the whole administrative team. To him the villagers take their troubles and difficulties. And he must have the practical ability to convince the villagers of the usefulness of the improved practices which the development programme operates.

The material development of the Chingleput Block has progressed with remarkable success. You can see this as you travel through the Block area — the ever extending acreage of paddy under the Japanese method of cultivation, the use of improved farm implements, the long lines of green manure crops which border the fields and stand ready to replenish the richness of the soil before the next crop is sown, the eagerness with which farmers seek a *demonstration patch* within their fields and remedies unknown to them but a short while ago to fight disease in their cattle. The use of new chemical fertilizers and compost pits have grown apace. For those of use who prefer statistics, the following figures may be of some interest :—

Area brought under Japanese method of cultivation : 173 acres.

Area brought under green manure crops : 108.61 acres.

Area brought under vegetables : 19.84 acres.

Number of demonstration patches started : 154.

Number of trees planted : 37,094.

These figures refer to the quarter ending on December, 31st, 1954. In many cases the target figure for that period was well exceeded. The erection of veterinary dispensaries, and the care and protection of cattle against disease was ample proof that this sector of rural uplift was carefully attended to. It was interesting to hear that a recent epidemic among the cattle of the area could not be brought under control until the project officials had explained away the deep rooted and strong sentimental superstition of the villagers against any form of inoculation of cattle!

The establishment of Community Recreation Centres are, indeed, an outstanding achievement of this Block. One such centre, at Sadras, stands within view of the sea on the eastern outskirts of the development area. Its pleasant situation adds to the recreational value of the establishment. This building, like the others for the purpose of community activities, has been constructed by the free labour of the village folk. Project officials have seconded the efforts of the people by supplying the Centre with a radio, various types of games and books for the library. That the library is well patronized by the people of the village was evidenced by the many names in the daily register of books lent out. Near this Centre at Sadras, lay neat piles of red bricks all made by the villagers and kept ready to go into the erection of the school building for the village children. This was yet another proof that this development area was teaching the people the art of self-help.

The establishment of these Recreational Centres, even more than any achievement in agriculture, irrigation, and so on, amply indicates that the project offi-

cials have found the key to real progress of our village communities. Such Centres effectively help make the Community Development Block, a real *community*, in the full sense of the term. That is to say, these Centres help bring the people together, they grow to know each other, they discuss common problems of the village, isolation-barriers are broken down, and slowly that *we-sentiment*, so precious to community life and effort comes into being. In fact, while no one will decry the value of material uplift which is brought about by the Community Development Programme, it cannot be denied that a greater achievement is the rehabilitation of the mind and pattern of conduct which is effected by this Development Block in particular.

The realisation of the community spirit is all the more necessary in our villages, when it is remembered that farming is not merely a method of making a living. It is a way of life. Our village people live an integrated life. They have their own pattern of life and behaviour which is the outcome of years of tradition and custom. Thus, long years of struggle against climatic conditions, a poor soil and distrust of the outsider have tended to drive deep into the soul of our villagers, an apathy and rugged individualism. Moreover, the villager sees his activities around the domestic hearth, in his fields and farm closely bound up with his beliefs and religious practises, albeit, superstitious. From this source springs a set of values so cherished by the village communities. The displeasure and fear of their gods, the demands of their caste and local traditions and a distrust of the unknown are woven into their pattern of daily life.

Rural rehabilitation, therefore, means changing not only the material structure of our villages, but also the deeper sentiments and customs of the village population. Not only must they be taught to change their methods of agriculture, of cattle protection and preservation, and even their domestic way of life, but a method must be found of convincing them that the new way of life does not offend their customs and traditions. When the farmer is told that the artificial fertilizers will improve his fields and give him a better crop, in actual practice this means that he must change his cherished faith in the gods of the fields and farms ! When he is told that he must inoculate himself and his cattle against certain diseases, this means that he must give up his age old faith in the goddess of health ! The impact of these new methods for rural uplift, tend to shake the whole foundation of his life, and risk the disintegration of his former way of life.

It was, indeed, refreshing to see how successfully the project officers of the Chingleput Development Block have handled this delicate problem of social change in the lives of the people within the Block. The contribution of the Community Recreation Centres towards this end, we have already noted. The co-operative spirit and the *community feeling* have also been successfully cultivated. Proof of this was seen in the common efforts of the villagers to solve the common problems of the villages, such as the need of a better water supply or better roads. Common effort has already supplied these public needs in many parts of the development area. Individual contribution has been expressed in various forms. Sometimes it has been in money. At other times it has been in free

labour. Perhaps, the best illustration of the growth of the spirit of co-operation was seen in the action of some villagers who donated part of valuable land for the construction of roads for the use of all in the neighbourhood.

The establishment of Village Development Committees which incorporate members of the Gram Panchayat is yet another proof of the right approach used by the project officers in the matter of rural betterment. Indeed, leadership in the village is naturally entrusted to the Panches, and if these men are brought round to understand the effectiveness of the development programme, more than half the battle of rural uplift is won. Moreover, the development programme is spaced over a fixed number of years, and when this period is over, there will still be need of a sustained effort on the part of the village communities to keep up the work done. This can only be realised if the leaders of the village are prepared to continue the good work. An interesting and effective means employed by the project officers to win the co-operation of the village people, is the practice of advertising, at the entrance of each village, the many items of development undertaken by that village, and also, the names of leaders who are responsible for village-co-operation. For who, indeed, is not urged to still better effort, when he sees his name written up for an honourable mention, whether this be in a famous daily newspaper, or even on the walls on a modest village dwelling?

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C. C. Clump

## *Catholic Social Activity*

### **Bettiah Parish**

This little parish in the diocese of Patna has some 250 families most of whom belong to the lower middle class. Owing to widespread unemployment quite a number of families are finding it increasingly difficult to provide for themselves and their dependents the barest necessities of life. To assist these in some way the parish has started several schemes which help many destitute families.

1. To help poor women who have of necessity become the sole bread-earners for their families the Holy Cross Sisters are operating an industrial school. Knitting woolen goods, hosiery, vestment-making, washing, sorting and selling cancelled stamps collected from various parts of the world, laundry are the main occupations. Only the poor women of the parish are employed. Some 50 destitute women are supported through this institution.

2. About 32 families are maintained through the parish printing press, a non profit making concern run mainly for the benefit of the parishioners. Besides finding jobs for many, the press also trains every year a certain number of boys in the art of printing, book-binding and other allied subjects. Some of these boys have found good positions elsewhere after finishing their training.

3. Members of the parish sodality go round once a week and make a house to house collection of rice. Some give a handful and some give more but all give

something and enough is collected to help out some 25 families.

4. The latest venture is a credit union inaugurated on 28 February of this year. This will help the local artisans, mostly carpenters and black-smiths. We wish this new union every success and hope to hear more about it in the days to come.

All these above activities are in addition to the usual parochial social works such as schools for boys and girls, free scholarships for poor children, grants to poor families, medical aid through free dispensaries, distribution of milk, etc.

A very creditable array of activities indeed for a small parish.

***The Defence Services Catholic Association, Poona.***

We have just received the Second Annual Report of this Association. Some excellent attempts are here being made to get the workmen together and to cater to their more urgent needs. For instance, the Welfare Fund, that provides financial assistance to deserving members by means of a loan without interest, benefited several members to the tune of Rs. 238. On the other hand, repayments of the loan by borrowing members came in slowly and Rs. 162 is outstanding on this account.

Welfare work in the form of visiting sick members and those in distress has increased, and the Association is regularly represented at funerals of departed members. A death fund is functioning successfully and is a boon to the families afflicted by the death of an earning member.



Social Activities in the form of gatherings at Christmas and socials and dances during the year were well patronised. And the reception to his Eminence, Cardinal Gracias, was an overwhelming success. Bridal couples were presented with a statue of Our Lady while more important members who had worked for the Association were given farewell parties on transfer to another place.

However the report has also failures to record. Chief of these were the very poor attendance at the Hindi classes specially organised for the men since they are all expected to pick up the language soon. Similarly the few lectures on Labour Relations failed to attract the members.

The real difficulties of the Association arise from the fact that it is made up of heterogeneous groups with different tastes, customs and standards of judging. Further the lack of a meeting place for the men is a big handicap and has been mentioned as one of the more urgent needs of the Association.

The training of the members and the moulding of their attitudes takes place mainly through their activities. During their meetings they are taught the democratic way of taking decisions and arguing their cases. And on their spiritual and social occasions they are reminded of the need for developing the community spirit, and the part they must play in fostering the right type of Unionism with their work-fellows.

Up to date, the Association has over a thousand rupees in the Savings Bank, and its total liabilities and assets balance at over Rs. 2000.

We wish the Association many more years of useful social activity and may it foster the growth of a deeper community spirit among its members, and prepare them for their work as active and free trade unionists.

### ***Tamil Nad Regional Board of Social Action***

The first meeting of the Tamil Nad Regional Board of Social Action was held on 21st and 22nd of February, 1955, at the Catholic Centre, Madras.

In all twenty-three delegates from eight out of the eleven dioceses of Tamil Nad participated. Among them were priests, Sisters, laymen and women.

At the beginning of the meeting, Rev. Fr. Thomas Joseph of the Madras Archdiocese, the convenor of the Conference, was elected Chairman and Mr. V. J. Arokiaswamy, rapporteur.

A Working Committee consisting of one member from each of the dioceses was set up. The following were elected with power to co-opt one from each diocese not represented: Mr. Santiago Ignatius (Tiruchi), Mr. Irudayaswamy Nadar (Tanjore), Sr. Theresa (Madura), Mrs. J. Dumont (Pondicherry) and Mr. Joseph Utheriam (Coimbatore).

The conference also elected the office-bearers for the current year. These are: Rev. Fr. Thomas Joseph, President, Mr. V. J. Arokiaswamy, Secretary and Rev. Mother Raphael, Treasurer.

The main resolutions of the meeting are as follows:-

1. To request the Bishops of Tamil Nad to make a minimum contribution of Rs. 100/- per diocese, to defray the expenses of the Board.

2. To request the Indian Institute of Social Order, Poona, to furnish a list of social works which come within the purview of Government recognition and grants.
3. To suggest to the Central Board of A. I. C. S. C. (Social Institute, Poona) that in future its meetings be held at the place and around the time the Indian Conference of Social Work is held so as to enable the Catholic delegates to participate in the Conference and meet delegates. Besides saving time and expense, this arrangement will enable Catholics to attend the Indian Conference when matters affecting Catholics come up for discussion and put forth their views.
4. To ask all members to make a detailed and careful study of disabilities suffered by children of Scheduled caste Christians in the matter of educational facilities, and report at the next meeting.
5. To explore possibilities of holding a Seminar during summer to give an opportunity for Social workers to gain knowledge and share in the experience of others.
6. To hold the meeting of the Working Committee once every three months.

The Conference also drafted a Constitution for the Regional Board. It has been forwarded to the Indian Institute of Social Order, Poona, for their remarks. When it is received back it will be circulated among the Ordinaries of Tamil Nad and finalised.

The meeting closed after deciding to meet again at Madura in May.

F. C. R.

## *Social Documents*

### ***The Australian Hierarchy on a Family Wage***

Every year the Australian Hierarchy publishes an official statement on Social Problems confronting the country. The latest document of this series published on September 5th, 1954 deals with the problem of a just Family Wage. We shall give here below some extracts from this important document.

"The Catholic Church has never ceased to declare that unless the control of productive property, of the means of production, is as widely decentralised as technical processes permit — unless workers are also owners — the institution of the family will be imperilled and the community as a whole based on unstable foundations.

Nevertheless, while Catholics are expected to spare no effort to disseminate the ownership and control of the means of production as widely as possible, they are faced with the present fact of the dependence of the majority of bread-winners on their employers through the prevalence of the wage system. It is vital, therefore, that that system should be just in practice and infused with Christian principles.

In the course of the present Statement, it will be made clear that we do not believe that the wage system as we know it today is either the fairest or even the most efficient method of remuneration. We will propose a system of Family income in its place."

The Hierarchy then goes on to the study of the wage structure in the last ten years since they issued

their publication on "Pattern for Peace." "A great transformation has taken place in the economic structure of the country under the impact of inflation. From December 1943 to December 1953, prices measured by the "C" series index had risen from 1268 to 2624 or 107 per cent."

Throughout this period of Australian history the system of cost-of-living adjustments to the basic wage prevailed. Though the wages increased the real gain to the worker was small as at the same time the cost of living also rose. But in spite of that there was a slight improvement, thanks mainly to certain labour legislation. "The first factor", say the Bishops, "to be recorded in assessing the condition of the wage system is that, underlying the great inflationary surge of wages and prices, some degree of real improvement has taken place." But yet all is not well for "we cannot but view with deep concern many developments which have taken place during the last few years."

The points which give rise to anxiety are briefly these :-

1. The clear statement by the Arbitration Court in its Basic Wage Judgement of October 1953 that the fundamental consideration in fixing the basic wage was simply an estimate of the "highest amount that industry can pay."
2. The relative deterioration of the real income of the worker with family responsibilities compared with that of other groups of workers.
3. The deterioration of the position of skilled workers.
4. The deterioration of the position of pensioners and other persons with fixed incomes.

As to the Basic Wage Judgement it must be pointed out that in spite of the comments of the judges to the effect that they themselves had their difficulties in fixing this standard the judgement goes against "the undoubted principles stated in the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* that wages should be related in some way to family needs."

There has always been a disparity in the wages of Australian workers with family responsibilities compared with that of other groups of workers. The worker with a family certainly needs more to meet his obligation than one who is not so burdened. "The minimum or basic wage should be so fixed with reference to the needs or requirements of the worker himself or herself, and those who have no dependents should not (the basis of distribution being according to needs) exceed their proper requirements."

Skilled labour is paid besides a basic wage like any other worker a *margin* payment. Though during the years under review, the basic wage has increased considerably the margin has remained more or less static and thus the remuneration of the skilled labourer has declined in comparison with that of the unskilled labourer.

Finally it is obvious that the condition of the fixed income group is really deplorable. "Pensioners and other recipients of social services have seen their real income driven down to often cruel levels, despite occasional increases by government action. Those who practised thrift, often at great sacrifice, in order to guarantee their livelihood during old age, by investing their savings in shares or rental properties, have been

the victims of what is, in effect, a confiscation of their assets".

"In the light of the above injustices and anomalies, we are of the opinion that there is need for a thoroughgoing overhaul of the Australian wage structure.

We believe also that any overhaul which concerns itself only with wages will be inadequate. Over-riding the concept of wages as the sole concern of the public authorities, attention should be devoted to the concept of an adequate "Family Income", of which the wage constitutes only one part. Accordingly, in the remainder of this Statement we will deal with such a system of Family Income, and refer to wages simply as part of such a system.

We hold the view that any new system resulting from such an overhaul must be based on dual foundations —

- A. A scientific assessment of the wage and other forms of family income according to the "needs" of the worker.
- B. An equally scientific measurement of the productivity of the economy to determine how far those "needs" can be met.

Furthermore, since it seems illogical to determine only the basic wage on a scientific basis, it is necessary to bring into reckoning also child endowment and other forms of family allowances, margins for skill and some forms of social services, including pensions.

We are not insensible to the great difficulties which will be faced by all of the public authorities which, in one way or another, will be involved in this re-assessment, in view of the condition of public opinion

and the vested interests at stake. However, to postpone the task because of these difficulties will simply ensure the development of further distortions and injustices with consequent disturbances to the peace of the community. The serious impact of all of the anomalies listed on the maintenance of public order will only become apparent if and when a series of bad seasons, or a fall in the prices of our exports, for example, prick the present bubble of apparent prosperity.

### ***A Basis of Understanding***

In attempting to suggest a just and rational basis for a Family Income system, we may assume that every one admits that in an ideal community all who are able and willing to work should have work and a decent living in return for their labour.

But how is that to be achieved? If three workers, a single man, a single woman and a married man with a large family, apply for work and undertake each to do the same amount of work, the employer may quite reasonably say that he is prepared to pay each of them a fair wage, to be fixed by mutual agreement, or by the relevant wage-fixing authority. But he does not think it realistic, or just, to expect or to compel him in addition to provide for the married man's large family. His firm or industry could not afford it.

The result of enforcing any such policy would be that single men and women would get employment by preference and the family man would remain unemployed. The family man has, of course, a right in strict justice to the same wage as his unmarried fellow



workers if they all do the same work for their employer. But that wage leaves his wife and children unprovided for. How is the financial gap to be bridged?

In the existing state of our economy, the onus, we suggest, rests upon the community or the state. In social justice, as distinct from strict justice, the state must come to the relief of the family man. Nor should it be urged that the state is asked to give a gratuitous subsidy to the family. For apart from the duty of Christian charity, the man who marries and rears a family renders an important and vital service to the stability, progress and defence of the state, and the state should willingly discharge its debt. Indeed, in Australia the state acknowledges this obligation when it provides child endowments and other social benefits.

The worker with a family responsibility, therefore, in addition to the wage which he, like the single man, is entitled to get from his employer, will receive from public funds a social benefit allowance for his wife and for each child dependent on him.

### **Components of Family Income**

To apply these general principles in practice, we suggest the following arrangement:-

1. There should be a Standard Wage, which would be that of a single man. This would cover his essential needs of food, clothing and shelter. It would provide a modest amount for recreation, and enable him to make partial provision for marriage. It would enable him to begin to make suitable provision, through public and private insurance, for old age, for periods of illness and unemployment. It would provide some opportunity where-

- by the prudent man, by the practice of thrift, could acquire a moderate amount of property for himself. The same amount would be fixed for either sex.
2. On his marriage, the worker would be entitled to an increase in income to provide now for his wife in addition to himself, and to provide also for savings in anticipation of the expense of the birth of a child. He would also be entitled to a bonus to enable him to purchase in part his house and furniture.
  3. On the birth of each child, he would be entitled to an added weekly payment to cover the cost of his dependent children. Endowments for dependents should remain so long as dependency exists.

If our society were organized on vocational lines, with the workers and employers in each industry joined together in Industrial Councils, the money for these payments would come primarily from the industry concerned, which would establish an equalization fund out of which the payment could be made. In the present state of public organisation in Australia, it seems that there is no alternative to the payment of these endowments by the State.

### ***Advantages of the Family Income System***

The advantages of such a system are clear.

1. It will meet the individual normal and reasonable requirements of every adult worker, man or woman. It will ensure that employers meet the specific obligations imposed on them in strict justice while

society as a whole fulfils the obligations of social justice.

2. By providing the same basic wage for workers, irrespective of sex, it will eliminate the competition between the sexes. Female labour will not be exploited on account of its relative cheapness. Men will not be replaced by women in industry for the same reason.

3. It will correct a situation in which a youth of twenty-one years, with no dependents and no responsibilities other than to provide for his own necessities of clothing, food and shelter (the last mentioned two items often met by a small payment for "board" to his parents), accedes immediately upon majority to practically the same income as is available to a married worker with children.

4. The Standard Wage being based upon the needs of a single man or woman, the wage at twenty-one years of age, though sufficient, may be lower. However, because of the safeguards described below, there will be no advantage to employers in replacing "old" workers by "new" adults.

5. The provisions for full child endowment will at least tend to remove the economic reasons for restricting the size of the working man's family.

6. A complete overhaul of the structure would, of course, make provision for adequate marginal payments for really skilled workers. It would ensure that the comparative position of skilled and unskilled workers, was not destroyed by the lapse of time.

#### **Cost-of-Living Index**

Once the Family Income had thus been firmly anchored to the concept of "needs", the fulfilment of

which would be the primary purpose of a proper system of remuneration, it would be logical to vary the constituent parts of the Family Income (wages, endowment, etc.) periodically in accordance with variations in the cost-of-living.

### **A Productivity Index**

As Pope Pius XI pointed out in *Quadragesimo Anno*, the condition of the national economy must also be taken into consideration in determining the level of income which should be enjoyed from time to time.

We note that many competent economists urge that a productivity index should be compiled and that variations in productivity should be taken into account in varying wages. It is held that there are great technical difficulties in the way of the development of such an index. If these difficulties can be overcome, increases in productivity thus scientifically measured would determine the proportion of the workers' "needs" which could be met from time to time. They would ensure that increases in wages and endowment would be real and not merely nominal. They would provide a standard by which the worker's claim to share in the fruits of technical advancement could be safely conceded.

Once the Family Income has been placed on a "needs" basis, the Cost-of-living Index could be used to vary its constituent parts in accordance with variations in living costs. The Productivity Index would guide the relevant authorities as to the proportion of the worker's "needs" which could be met from time

to time and the rate at which the whole level of Family Income could be raised without running the risk of inflation.

Constructive thinking of this type is to be commended as a valuable contribution to the discovery of a rational method of assessing Family Income.

### ***Application by Degrees***

Such a re-assessment of the entire structure of Family Income, however firmly it might be embedded in justice, would certainly be faced with great practical and political difficulties. In "Pattern for Peace", the suggestion was made that the system should be introduced gradually. It could be applied, for instance, to the case of workers as they reach majority, leaving those already in receipt of the adult "basic wage", as at present assessed, and who would be the losers under the new system, to continue under the present arrangement.

In the early stages of the change, until the new system covered all workers, the state could collect from employers the difference between the Standard Wage which they paid to each "new adult" and the amount which they would have been called upon to pay had the old basic wage still endured.

In this way there will be no incentive for employers to dispense with present employees, to make way for the new adults. The difference, which would have to be paid by employers to the state, could be utilized by the state to assist in the payment of endowment.

The duty of assessing the new Standard Wage, margins, the amount of endowments, and even of

pensions and related social services should be imposed upon a public authority of the type of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, the principles of assessment described above having been statutorily defined and uniform legislation passed throughout the Commonwealth. We believe that once the political authorities have laid down the principles on which Family Income is to be based, the assessment of the actual amounts is better left in the hands of a non-political authority, with skilled economic, statistical and legal advice at its disposal.

### **Conclusion**

Whether one considers workers or employers or independent working proprietors, all draw their rewards from the totality of the national income. If employers receive too great a share of that income, an injustice is visited upon the workers. If one section of the workers receives too great a share, others of their fellow workers are alike victims of injustice.

It must therefore be emphasized unconditionally that this method of fixing of Family Income does not mean any diminution of the total amount paid by employers to workers. At the very least, it is only a redistribution of the total amount already paid in wages to workers on a scientific estimate of the real needs of each individual. Needless to say, there is nothing to prevent whatever increase is deemed desirable in the total share of the national income earned by the workers to ensure a progressive rise in the standard of living.

This, then, is the practical and constructive proposal which we put forward for consideration as one

possible remedy for many of the anomalies and injustices which now exist under the varied heads — wages, endowment, pensions and social services.

In *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pius XI pointed out that it is impossible to assess a just return for a man's labour simply by taking one aspect of the question into consideration. Many factors enter into the matter, among them being the question of "needs", the state of the individual business, and the condition of the national economy. The concept of Family Income, elaborated above, takes all of those problems into consideration. Furthermore, it is an approach to the concept of a "Social wage" enunciated by Pius XII.

We do not doubt that it will require both courage and foresight on the part of all concerned to bring such a system into being. In the long run, however, the birth-pangs of a new system will almost certainly be less painful than the constant and recurring tensions occasioned by the anomalies and injustices of the old."

F. C. R.

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## *Social Survey*

### **The Russian Steel Plant**

The Indo-Soviet Steel Agreement has been signed and thus has passed from the project stage to a contract. Communists and fellow travellers are exultant. The Red press is unusually loud in its praises and is making every effort to convince the public that the agreement is not so much a contract between two

parties but rather an outright gift to this country from our Soviet friends. This very vehemence of the propaganda should make one a bit suspicious. Let us examine the agreement a little and see whether the Soviet offer is more advantageous to India than the German, Krupps—Demag, plant at Rourkella.

First we are told that the Russian plant will be cheaper than the German one. Is this true? The Rourkella plant has been officially estimated to cost 72½ crores of rupees while the Bilhai one will cost 100 crores but its production, however, will be twice that of the former. Therefore we are told the Soviet one is cheaper. But it is good to remind ourselves that the capital cost of a factory with twice the capacity of another in the same line of production is never twice that of the latter, but considerably less. Besides the items to be produced by the German combine are such that they need more expensive machinery than that of the Soviets.

The Soviet equipment will cost 43.4 crores. We do not yet know how much the Rourkella machinery will cost as it will be obtained on the basis of a world wide tender. The least we can say is that a comparison on this score is not possible at this time.

The Germans have to be paid about Rs. 2 crores for the project report; the Soviets 2.5 crores. Both parties will hand over the plant to the Government of India whose property they will become.

Much is made of the low rate of interest — 2½% — charged by the Russians. Article XII of the Agreement reads :

“The credit shall be repaid by 12 equal annual installments payable on or before 15th day of March of



each and every year following the year in which each such credit is raised. Interest will accrue at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent per annum from the date on which each particular credit is raised and will be similarly paid on or before the 15th day of March of the following year. No interest shall accrue on such amounts of the credit as have been repaid."

"If the figures are worked out, it will be seen that for every 100 units of credit raised on a given date, 116 $\frac{1}{4}$  units will have been paid towards capital repayment and interest at the end of 12 years. In other words, if the Soviet share of the investment were to be acquired outright in one transaction at the end of the 12th year, the premium payable on the face value of the Soviet share would be 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ %. Now the Indo-German agreement provides that the Indian Government and the German combine will reciprocally have the option binding on each other, to buy or sell the German share of the capital at a premium of 20% of the face value of the shares at the end of the 9th year reckoned from the initial investment date. This yields an interest figure, over the nine-year period, of a little less than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent as against the Soviet  $2\frac{1}{2}$ %. The saving on the interest effected by installment payment in the case of the Russians (the difference between the total premium of 20 and 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ ) is no real gain, since the annual installments of capital repayment we shall make would have earned interest for us if payment were differed for 12 years and made in one lump sum." (Thought, 12 Feb. 1955, p. 4.)

While the German agreement takes full account of water supply and the township the Soviet agreement

leaves it to the Indian Government which means India will have to pay to set up these.

The supply of coal for the plant may entail an extra expenditure as local coal does not seem to be fit for metallurgical purposes: at least it has not been proved that it is fit.

Much was said of the time element. The Soviet plan was supposed to be ready in 18 months. The Agreement fixes 31 December, 1959 as the final date for the completion. When all the factors, such as supply of equipment, building, erection of the plant, etc. are considered it is very doubtful whether it will be ready by the end of 1959.

The only thing that is quite clear and beyond dispute is that this plant will be a boon to the Communists and their masters in their work of subversion. No wonder the Red press is so enthusiastic!

### ***The Report of the A. L. E.***

The report of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry is out and makes very interesting reading. The Enquiry was made through a large and well-trained and well-supervised field staff, who collected the data by personally interviewing selected agricultural families. The Enquiry was begun in 1950. The results are presented in seven volumes. We shall give here a few statistics which throw some light on the problem of agricultural labour in the country.

Out of 58 million rural families in India, 17.6 million belong to agricultural labour. In 1951, 30.4% of the rural families were of agricultural workers, 22.6% landowners, 27.2% tenants and the rest, 22.2% were

non-agriculturalists. According to localities N. W. India had 77%, Central India 84% and East and South India 79% agricultural families.

Of the 6.2 million agricultural families in South India Madras State alone accounts for 5.1 million. There were 5 million agricultural families in Eastern India of whom well over 50% came from Bihar. The size of the family in North West India was larger than in any other part of the country. South and North East India had the smallest families.

The classification of families into earners, helpers and dependents works out as: out of 5.01 persons in a family 1.57 were earners, 0.96 were helpers and 2.48 dependents.

The average size of holdings is 7.5 acres of which 6.6 are cultivated and the rest lying fallow. Of this 4.4 acres was owned and the rest, 3.1 acres held on lease.

### **Community Projects**

The Community Projects as well as the National Extension Service have made progress and the villagers are reaping the fruit everywhere. In 1954, 9025 miles of kutchra and 757 miles of pukka road have been built under the C. P. and 2716 miles of Kutchra and 294 miles of Pukka under the N. E. S.

The area of land irrigated by major projects in 1954 was five million acres. Three hundred thousand acres of kass ineffectuated land in Bhopal was cleared during the same year.

All the States have reported good progress in various nation building activities. In Bihar they have

been concentrating on the supply of good water for drinking purposes and on putting up decent buildings to house schools. Assam devoted much attention to wells, tanks and village communications. In Orissa the emphasis was on water supply, irrigation and schools.

The craze for family planning is still raging in many quarters. But from all reports the planners are making little headway in the rural areas.

Many Congressmen are of opinion that the N. E. S. should be concerted into Community Projects. In judging the progress of the C. P. or N. E. S. one should not go so much after actual results obtained in material works but must rather see the progress made in village organisation.

### **Landholdings**

There is a move everywhere to put a ceiling on landholdings. In Jammu and Kashmir it is fixed at 22½ acres. West Bengal, Bihar and Madhya Bharat propose to limit it to 33, 30 and 30 acres respectively.

U. P., Hyderabad, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Barat, Vindhya Pradesh, Bhopal are trying to stop fragmentation of land.

### **Unemployment**

The problem of unemployment is still acute. The Union Finance Minister, Mr. C. D. Deshmukh, is of the opinion that in ten years time 24 million jobs will be created and the spectre of unemployment will be banished from the Indian sub-continent. He says that with the development of the public and private sectors

of industry more and more people will find employment. His estimate may be a bit optimistic but optimism does much good.

### **The Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation**

To help industry an Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation has been set up in Bombay with a capital of 25 crores. British investors will contribute one crore, U. S. A. half a crore, the Government of India 7.5 crores, the International Bank 5 crores. The Corporation will lend to private industry long, medium and short term loans. Incidentally the setting up of this Corporation goes to show that the talk of the Socialistic pattern of the new Indian economy has to be understood in an altogether restricted sense.

### **Labour Problems**

The West Bengal Government has been urging industry to absorb more and more Displaced persons. Special advantageous treatment is promised to those who will start industrial undertakings in D. P. colonies.

In Ajmere many mica workers are idle. The Supreme Court has ruled that the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 is not *ultra vires* of the Constitution of India. The Ajmere Government has fixed minimum wages at Rs. 1/8 per day. The mine owners say that in the present state of business it is impossible for them to pay such high wages. Many mines have been shut down and the few which are working have very few workers on the list.

E. Gathier

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## BOOK REVIEWS

***Foundations of Morality***

(by Louis Leguen, S.J. pp. 100, publisher and price not stated.) Part I.

This little book is written for students, apparently University grade. "Its aim," states the author, "is to make you (students) wish, desire, and strive to be better than you are, to become as perfect as you can be, to become such fine and finished types of human beings as win the love and admiration of men everywhere: such noble and beautiful characters as we all admire and wish we were." (Preface). As is clear from the above quotation the book is meant to be a text for the Moral Science class. In this part the great problem why man should be Moral is exhaustively treated.

Written by an eminent professor of English the book makes most interesting reading. The many and apt quotations from wellknown poets with whom College students are familiar adds to the attractiveness of the work.

The printing, however, leaves much to be desired. The far-too-small and light print is rather hard on the eyes.

Students as well as teachers will find in this little thought-provoking manual sound principles of ethics lucidly and clearly treated and explained.

F. C. R.

**Fatal Star**

(by Hamish Fraser. John S. Burns, Glasgow 1954.)

That thought is for action was one of the favourite maxims of the social philosopher, Karl Marx. It has also remained the doctrine of Hamish Fraser after he left the Communist Party in 1946 and joined the Church two years later. There is a special ring of earnest sincerity about this story of growing disillusionment and groping for the truth that should cause its readers to do some soul-searching as to whether they are playing their part in the struggle against evil. Much of what the author says of his fellow Catholics in Scotland can, we are afraid, be applied to us here. "Not once," he complains, "in a decade and a half of unrelenting activity within the working class movement did I ever hear a single Catholic trade unionist give voice to an idea even remotely related to the social teachings of the Church."..... "Too often the faith of the faithful burns too dimly for men to see our good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven." Since doubting Thomas is the patron saint of modern man, "he would fain see the risen Christ. Consequently the ever contemporary miracle of the Church — not only her witness to what she has seen, but the miracle of what she is — is more important than ever today."

Those who querulously complain that the social encyclicals are dry-as-dust documents unrelated to modern problems could usefully read the chapter "Twentieth Century Pilgrim's Progress" (the best chapter in the opinion of the reviewer) and discover for themselves how the author "was thereby convinced

that the social teaching of the Church provided not only a way of life but also the only means whereby the modern proletariat could be effectively emancipated... Thenceforth I began to be aware of the immense potentialities, not only for me, but for all Catholics if they only could be made aware of the social implications of their Faith." The author asks a very pertinent question: "Why was it... that Catholics who alone had an effective answer to the social problems of the modern age not only did little to implement the social teachings of the Church, but were, more often than not, content to re-echo the social ideology of Marxism."

There are some very strong things against Catholic "progressive", those who pretend to associate themselves with the better side of Marxism: "Let those who dislike the Soviet reality face up to the fact that the features to which they object derive directly from the main premise of Marxist thought". The woolly thinking that admires Communist doctrine while condemning its action (which flows from the doctrine) deserves to be shown up, but both here and in some other places in the book we find the convert still breathing out fire on his back from Damascus. S & B Webb's *Soviet Communism* is quoted without any qualifying note. On account of the prestige of the authors for objective research, it would be wise to point out that on this occasion the Webbs left most of their scientific equipment behind.

The chapters on "Does Fatima Make Sense?" and "Mary and the Social Order" are a tribute to the author's deep piety and a lesson on how to connect



social problems with a living faith. As for the incident of the "miraculous" Fatima dove, I by far prefer Mrs. H. Fraser's explanation that the poor thing mistook the author's unkept mop for its nest.

May the author produce a further brood of inspiring thoughts.

A. N.

**God's Ways With Men**

(by P. J. Sontag, S.J., The C.B.C., St. Xavier's, Patna, Two vols. Pp. xii-476, vi-474. Rs. 15/- per set.)

Of all sciences the most important is the science of the spiritual life, and yet sad to say, the least popular. The cause is not far to seek, for while other sciences have an abundance of literature to cater for the tastes and abilities of every one, the Science of spiritual life is starved for literature. Take, for instance, the question of mental prayer. Any one who knows the rudiments of asceticism will admit that mental prayer is absolutely necessary for one desiring to make any progress in spiritual life. A book which explains points or considerations on the truths of religion is, if not an essential, at least a very useful guide for most people. How many suitable books of this kind have we? Few indeed. And these few are not quite satisfactory. For one thing they are out of date, for while the truths they unfold and the applications they make are timeless their approach and presentation is not modern, and for another they are mostly meant for priests and nuns. What has the layman got?

To meet the needs of the modern man, especially the common layman who strives to live a fervent life, Fr. Sontag has published two volumes of meditations

which have about them a modernity and freshness of approach which brings one back to the book, expectant of new treasure-truths to be unearthed. It is a simple and yet sound and profound guide of man's way to God.

Though perhaps mainly intended for the layman, priests, seminarians, and all religious men and women will find these meditations eminently suited to their needs. The aim of the consecrated soul is to be Christ-like, alter Christus. That ideal or pledge of loyalty to keep Christ present in every phase of our daily life is constantly kept before our eyes so that "over and over again we are urged to behold our Divine Master, that day by day we may become more, like him, more with him."

Particularly noteworthy is the social character of the meditations for they stress the daily application of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ in all our neighbours to such an extent that we shall not be at rest until all things are restored in Christ. There are several meditations which treat explicitly the social, and political responsibilities of every Catholic, be he layman or cleric.

The volumes were first published in America. The high cost, Rs. 50/- per set, was beyond the means of most people in this country. We must thank the author for bringing out an Indian edition, moderately priced at only Rs. 15/- per set. The Sanjivan Press has done such an excellent job that the only difference between the American and Indian editions is in the price.

F. C. R.

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2. To provide theoretical and practical training for social workers.
3. To serve as a centre of information about social works.

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